Fort Ord and Nellie

After the Military Court Marshal in Japan, Uncle Sam was still not done with ***Private*** Robert Vallejos. He was sent to Fort Ord, California.

"And why was I at Fort Ord? Because the Post Commander and I was in combat, (when he was) a captain. He wound up taking charge of Ft. Ord and guess who he wanted to train troops for Korea? ME! I only knew him roughly 30 – 40 days, around 15 July to the end of August 1950, when I was getting information for G-2. (Us 'Cayuga' guys) would actually (sneak) into where the tanks were, get inside the tanks and find manuals and crap. I even crawled into (enemy) tents and (took) out data. I was the shits! That's how he recognized me as the best."

Sample photo.

Robert was a training instructor for Battery A, 51st Field Artillery Battalion. After hours he and the guys would stop at the NCO club (open to instructors of any rank) and enjoy a coke or a couple of beers. The club was also open to the WAC's (Woman's Army Corp). There Robert met dental technician PFC Nellie O. Guerrero. She and friend Pauline Brown took a shine to the lean 6'2", GI.

While Robert was in the hospital having dental surgery; needed to correct the broken jaw caused by a rifle butt; he had visitors.

"(Nellie) and Pauline brought me some flowers, and I just flat said, 'You wanna marry me? (Nellie) says 'Yes!"

"We used to run around together (with) Betty, Pauline and their boyfriends. We'd go eat downtown: crab, lobster, any smelly fish we could find. And, uh, sleep on the beach. Course (the others) would do their number, I didn't. I told her, 'I will not have sex with you until I marry you.' Oh, we cuddled (but that's all that happened). And I'm proud of it."

So, within 6 months of returning to the states, Robert married Nellie on 1 March 1952.

"We had one of the finest military weddings you ever saw! Oh, they had them swords (up) and we marched under (them). My company commander was my best man. I had it made in the military. That was my home. I was training troops for Korea at the time. I (went) in for 20 years."

However, Uncle Sam realized Robert was damaged goods. The Army could not afford to allow such a volatile, trained killer to remain in the service. The 'permanent rank of Private' was meant to encourage Vallejos to leave the Army. Sadly, Robert complied.

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Symptoms of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) in veterans.

1.) Recurrent, intrusive reminders of the traumatic event, *including distressing thoughts, nightmares and flashbacks where you feel like the event is happening again. You may experience extreme emotional and physical reactions to reminders of the trauma such as panic attacks, uncontrollable shaking and heart palpitations.*

2) Extreme avoidance of things that remind you of the traumatic event, *including people, places, thoughts or situations you associate with the bad memories. This includes withdrawing from friends and family and losing interest in everyday activities.*

3) Negative changes in your thoughts and mood, *such as exaggerated negative beliefs about yourself or the world and persistent feelings of fear, guilt or shame. You may notice a diminished ability to experience positive emotions.*

4) Being on guard all the time, jumpy and emotionally reactive, *as indicated by irritability, anger, reckless behavior, difficulty sleeping, trouble concentrating and hypervigilance.*

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Nellie was warned about Robert; certainly, by the company commander who also acted as Robert's best man. But Nellie was sure her love could tame the savage beast. Robert certainly hoped so. Still, he was honest with her, just as she was with him.

"(Nellie) told me what she was, even that she'd had… (a boyfriend?) in high school, and everything else. (Then) I was having some very weird flashbacks, maybe 2 or 3 times a day. I warned (Nellie), even before we had got married…what to expect. She generally loved me for what I am. She went through a hell of a lot of terror with me and my damned nightmares and flashbacks."

Robert was compelled to call his folks, to tell them about his upcoming marriage.

"The day I called my mother to tell her we were gonna get married, (Gertrude) said, 'Let me speak to her.' And from that day on is when (Nellie) changed 180 degrees from this beautiful, wonderful girl I wanted to marry…"

"I'll tell ya, if it hadn't been for my parents, she'd of turned out to be a very wonderful woman."

Since Nellie's parents and sister Sophie lived in Sacramento, California, that was where she and Bob elected to go after the Army. Bob had already talked with some potential employers in the area. He lined up for a job with the Southern Pacific Railroad as a molder's helper.

"(I was the) inspectors' helper. I would study the bushings that were made out of bronze. (They were made) for the railroad cars (and) were placed one on top, one on bottom of the axles of the cars. (But) they used to have problems with so many cracks. No matter what the molder did with his sand (mix) to make a good bushing, (it often) wound up with cracks. For some dumb reason I went and asked, 'what do they use to form the metal? What do they put in there?' They told me, and I said, 'There's something missing here.' (After studying it) I found out they had the wrong mixture…they were missing something. (I suggested they) try a controlled pouring in a mold, (with my formula). And they did. My mold had no fractures of any kind! Best bearing they had seen in a 100 years!"

"Not only (did I keep my job during layoffs) I kept getting promoted and I got up as high as being (able) to take my supervisors (place) in the reclamation department. (Wayne Ramsey). I used to get paid to go fishing with him! You couldn't ask for a better job!" (Bob earned $4,700 for the year 1953 – or about $98 a week.)

Bob and Nellie welcomed their first born, Catherine Vallejos, in December 1952. Come the following spring Nellie was with child again. Robert Vallejos Jr. made his debut in December 1953.

They lived in a basement apartment, rented from an elderly woman they called Grandma Belshore. Nellie's parents, her sister Sophie and husband all lived nearby. By now it was spring 1954; Cathy was about 16 months old and baby Robert around 4 months.

"I came home (from swing shift) one night and found that Grandma Belshore had taken little Robert to the hospital with a bad concussion. Nellie wasn't around. Them poor kids. Cathy and Robert were in that crib together and tipped it over. Robert was the one that got the big bang on his head. (Grandma Belshore) heard all the screaming downstairs, so she went to go see what was wrong. When Nellie came home around mid- night, I raised all kinds of hell…told her what happened and where Robert was. She didn't say nothing, she just had that glazed look."

Nellie confided in her sister Sophie all the problems she had at home with Bob and the kids. Sophie then told her Navy husband, who decided to stick up for his sister-in-law.

"He was a big son-of-a-bitch, hell I had to look up at him. He tried to stick up for Nellie, (saying) it was none of my damn business of what she did. Well, that was the wrong (argument) because it pertained to my kids. He said, 'I'm gonna kick your ass!' (So) I beat that bastard to a pulp!"

After a couple of days Robert Jr. was released back home. Bob still had a very unhappy wife.

"(The apartment) was so dirty, maggots in the diaper bucket, no clean diapers, and filthy smelling basement. I'm the one who had to do the dishes, do the whole bit a woman's supposed to do."

"I came home around 9 – 10 o'clock at night, no Nellie, no kids – again. I went and checked all her family, which lived kinda close together…'No, we don't know where she's at.' Holy shit. That's when I went to Grandma Belshore and asked her. She said, 'Some two people came in a Studebaker, and they were from Colorado.' "

"Here we go; son-of-a-bitch. Well, next day I went and told my boss I had to quit. I gotta go to Colorado."